

Chapter 6 *School Meals*

Module 2: Environmental Changes with School Meals

Step Up and Step Out to develop school meals as a key component

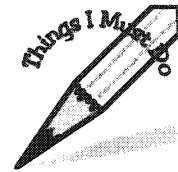
Now is the time to create actions that increase healthy eating choices, and link food service to the other components.



Where to start?

1. Involve key players

The school food service director plays a vital role in the actions planned and needs to be a part of planning from the very beginning.



2. Use information from the community review, listening sessions and VMSEA planning
Planning is now directed towards specific actions to meet the objectives set for school meals.

3. Build on what exists

Begin with easy to implement and low cost actions. Be flexible.

4. Plan actions using the environmental change methods

The methods are discussed in Chapter 2 *Action Planning* Module 5: Action Planning Tools to create plans for change:

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------|
| ♥ Policy | ♥ Repetition | ♥ Support |
| ♥ Collaboration | ♥ Education | ♥ Reward |

5. Plan for ways to measure success

Tips for measuring success are given in Module 5 of this Chapter.

Planning for Environmental Changes:

1. Involve key players
2. Use information from the community review, listening sessions and VMSEA planning.
3. Build on what exists.
4. Plan actions using environmental change methods
5. Plan ways to measure success
6. Take actions
7. Review results

6. Take actions

Planning is very important, but groups can get bogged down and people lose interest if actions are not taken early. The only way to be sure something will work is to try it!

7. Review results

The **Environmental Change Plan** is very helpful. The planning steps can be reviewed and comments for revision noted. It provides an excellent communication tool.

Action planning for environmental change



All six environmental change methods suggested in **Step Up and Step Out** can be applied to School Meals. Keep in mind that the methods can be used alone or in combination but form a strong circle of change when all six are combined.

“Policy” as a method for environmental change



Policies create a required environmental change and are very valuable for sustaining changes.

On the “down side” if written policies don’t work out as expected, they are sometimes difficult to change. Planning a “trial” period before formalizing a policy is one way to work out the bugs before they become “set in stone.” Sometimes a “tradition” becomes an *informal, unwritten policy* that becomes difficult to change.

What are the written or “unwritten” policies regarding healthy eating choices in your school meal program? Are there instances where “tradition” has just become a standard practice without thought given to whether or not it is a *good* practice? How can policies create healthy traditions?

Examples:



Example 1: There is a formal, written policy that all vending machines are off limits during school meal service hours to support school meal program participation and goals.

Example 2: Regardless of the fact that off campus lunch is allowed for junior high students, there is an unwritten policy that students are included in meal

planning to determine “favorites” and serving ideas show that the school food service listens and acts upon student feedback.

Example 3: There is a written policy to keep fund-raisers such as “pizza slice sales” from competing with school lunch.

“Collaboration” as a method for environmental change

The potential for change is great when partners work together to share responsibilities, resources, and rewards!

Examples:



Example 1: A brown bag travel meal for student field trips and athletic events doesn’t have to be a bologna sandwich, chips, and pop. Teachers and coaches can collaborate with school food service staff to provide healthy choice brown bags. These serve as hands-on practice with good nutrition teaching tools.

Example 2: School food service staff can collaborate with the PTO to provide healthy food choices at the concessions for a parent health fair. This is a great way to assist another partner in their efforts while creating yet another healthy eating opportunity!

Example 3: School food service often provides meals and snacks for teacher training days. One school food service developed a healthy meal buffet in collaboration with teacher representatives *and* went a step further to provide nutrition information.

“Repetition” as a method for environmental change



Giving up too soon is a common mistake when creating environmental change. Some things need repetition to “catch on.” Other times, repetition offers opportunities for improvement. With a little revision, a “disappointment” can become a success.

Examples:



Example 1: An announcement was made for students to sign up for tasting teams...an opportunity to taste new food products and give feedback. The

response was small, but those who participated had a great time, felt some ownership, and spread the word. Soon there was a waiting list to participate!



Example 2: The first time that a new and different ethnic meal was offered, many frowns were seen and “yucks” heard. Students were allowed to try a “taste” of the new food without having to take a complete portion. Food service staff surveyed the cafeteria. The next time around there was an increase in participation, and more “yums” all around!

Example 3: A baked potato with toppings was very well received by upper elementary students, but had a poor response from the lower elementary students. Repeating the menu with just a slight twist...potato slices rather than a “whole potato” for the younger students resulted in success!

“Education” as a method for environmental change

Education is needed to create awareness and increase knowledge and skills for making healthy eating choices.

Examples:



Example 1: Provide school meal nutrition information in a monthly teacher newsletter to help dispel misconceptions about menu items.

Example 2: Display a school lunch food tray in the lunch line with information such as servings from the Food Guide Pyramid, calories, fats, sodium, portion sizes, and MORE! Standing in line for lunch is usually considered a down, or non-utilized time. Why not use it to educate and help students make better food choices?

“Support” as a method for environmental change

Arranging the environment to make change easier is a key means of support. Resources and recognition are other ways the coalition can provide support.

Examples:



Example 1: A school board and administration that supports food service staff with time to do school meal promotions, classroom activities, and community involvement is an initiative winner!



Example 2: Teachers often feel that the school food meal program does not meet their personal needs for healthy food choices. An enterprising school created a survey just for teachers to find menu items that not only meets the nutritional needs of the students, but also serves to support efforts for healthy lifestyle practices by teachers. This action demonstrates collaboration as well as support to create a change!

Example 3: One school food service demonstrates great teamwork and support for teachers by providing “taste tests” in the classroom. Administration demonstrates support by setting up a general fund to automatically reimburse the school meal program for the costs from a pre-determined budget.

“Reward” as a method for environmental change

We all like to be rewarded for the changes we make. Reward keeps us motivated. It can be in the form of recognition, or a “prize” for something well done.

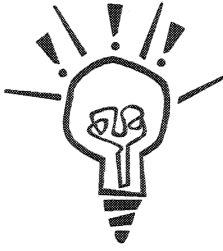
Examples:



Example 1: Classes that exhibit the best courtesy and manners in the cafeteria are allowed extra activity time throughout the school day. This action exemplifies peer group modeling and supports the goals of the initiative.

Example 2: Food service staff visits classrooms to explain school meal guidelines. The students then assist in creating a class menu that is served the following month as reward for their suggestions and participation in the school meal program. Printed menus are sent home to involve parents.

Example 3: Students and staff are all rewarded when time is taken to create fun with theme days! Everybody has a great time when food service staff dresses up like fruits and vegetables. Pair it with a “Here’s Your 5 (fruit and vegetable) Day,” and be set for a whole day of renewed interest in healthy choices!



Module Tip:

Environmental changes can be very subtle, and small, but have a large impact. Healthy choices created in school menu plans, and food service activities in the classroom are new, innovative forms of environmental change.

FAQs:

- ❑ **Question:** School lunch has always been prepared entrees, high fat items, and fast foods. How can we change that with this initiative?

Answer: First, involve and support the food service director. Next, involve the students and listen to their feedback. Also educate your audience. Items perceived as being high fat items may actually be low in fat or when balanced with low fat choices, create a healthy menu.

- ❑ **Question:** All the ideas sound great, but a lot of work. How do you keep it from getting overwhelming?

Answer: Just as with anything else, take it one step at a time, include as many people as possible to distribute time and resources, and don't forget the importance of reward through recognition and self-satisfaction!

This tool will help you go beyond the community review to take a closer look at school meals. Consider the following possibilities for each community group (students, teens, parents/adults, senior citizens, business and schools). Also use the information as a measure of progress.

The school cafeteria serves as a learning lab for healthy eating. Displays, posters, reminders are available and/or presentations/skits are performed showing appropriate

There is a collaborative effort between the classroom and food service to create a joint message for healthy eating choices. Teachers compare school menus to the Pyramid.

Food service staff participates in classroom learning. Lessons taught in the classroom are reinforced in the cafeteria. Students are able to help choose menus. Students take "learning tours" through food service.

List existing opportunities in your school that are not used to their full potential.

What are the communication, time, or location problems...or a lack of facilities or resources...that keep opportunities from being used to their full potential?

Which resources will be needed for making changes (people, facilities, and other resources)?

What type of support is being provided for opportunities to sustain the benefits?



Environmental Change Plan

School Meal Objective: Increase school lunch participation for Grades 1-5 to 90% by January 2006.

| Environmental change methods planned. Check all that apply. | Actions and resources needed to implement the plan | Problems to resolve | Who takes action, and by what date? | Review— results of actions Check all that apply. |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Repetition <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reward -or- problems resolved: <input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Time <input type="checkbox"/> Location <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Other | Action: <i>Classroom activities presented by FS staff</i> Marketing Plan: <i>Plan with teachers and send memo with dates</i> Resources: <i>FS staff, teachers, foods, preparation equipment, supplies for tasting, recipes, teaching activities, other education resource materials</i> Action: <i>Food service staff sets up tours of the department with a nutrition education/physical activity message</i> Marketing Plan: <i>Calendar to sign-up classrooms</i> Resources: <i>FS Director, classroom teachers, students, vendors, taste tests</i> Action: <i>Food service staff identifies classroom lessons</i> Marketing Plan: <i>Memo to teachers, article in newsletter, and information on monthly school meal menus, invite administrators and newspaper</i> Resources: <i>Dietitian, county extension agents, Team Nutrition, State Board of Education, Association of School Food Service Administrators</i> | Frequency, length of activities, who to do the activity, time for prep, money for tasting, planning with teachers | FS director coordinates with FS staff and teachers to develop a plan for 1 year by Sept. 20 Karen, Yolanda, and Bill plan tours and identify information by Oct. 1 Karen, Paula, and Steve plan lessons and coordinate presentations by Oct. 1 | Communication: <input type="checkbox"/> Great marketing <input type="checkbox"/> Need M-and-M's Time: <input type="checkbox"/> Good timing <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work Location: <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work Resources: <input type="checkbox"/> Feasible cost <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work Participation: <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work Overall: <input type="checkbox"/> Great-continue <input type="checkbox"/> Good-revise <input type="checkbox"/> Fair-revise |

Comments:

Example



Event Planning Tool

Title Of Program/Project/Event: Fruit/Vegetable Character Theme Day

☐ Media ☒ School ☐ Business ☐ Community

Target Audience/Numbers Forecasted:

☒ Students 450 ☐ Parents 40 ☒ Teachers 50 ☐ School meal director and staff _____

☒ School administrators 3-5 ☐ Business/community leaders/community-at-large 1-2

Outline/Description/Objectives:

Participants will become aware of healthy eating ideas.

1. Create a character costume. For example, use an orange sweatshirt, orange tights, green hat, etc. for a Carruther Carrot. A purple outfit could be used for Gus Grape. A "Nutri-Bird" outfit or similar character could also be created with MUCH imagination!!!
2. Have the character carry around a Grape Basket of Purple Grape Recipes and distribute. Use your imagination--roll recipes up and tie with a "grape ribbon" to create greater interest. Have Gus sing the "Raisin" song or other made up song. Gus could also carry food samples as an option.
3. If desired, have someone taking pictures of children with "Gus" and post on a school bulletin board later. Invite the local newspaper to use "Gus" pictures or have a local celebrity have his/her picture taken with "Gus."

Marketing Plan: Announcement in teacher's newsletter, send invitation for parents to attend, invite administrators and town newspaper reporter

Permits Or Permissions Required:

Resource Materials/Supplies/ Handouts/Food/:

1. Food samples and/or
2. Printing costs for recipes

Costs/Funding Source:

Varies with costume created

Manpower Needed:

Varies with length of lunch
1-3 hours

Space/Time/Date Requirements:

No space necessary

Prep Time:

Varies

Alternate Plan:

You may set up a booth in lieu of "wandering"

Comments: All went well! Plan to repeat once a year in October. Can also use this activity at a health fair.